

To:	Strategic Initiatives Committee	Item:	SIC-07-48	Date of Report:	November 6, 2007
From:	Rick Stockman, Commissioner Corporate Services Department	File:	A-2100	Date of Meeting:	November 15, 2007
Subject:	STRATEGIC TEAM TO ACHIEVE MORE EFFECTIVE DIRECT COMMUNICATIONS AND FUNDING FROM UPPER LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT			Ward(s):	ALL
	<i>Public Meeting</i>				

1.0 PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to respond to the Strategic Initiatives Committee direction of October 22, 2007 that requested a report be prepared for the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee concerning forming a Strategic Team made up of Council and staff members dedicated to achieving more effective direct communications and funding from upper levels of government.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

That the Strategic Initiatives Committee recommends to City Council:

1. That a Strategic Connections and Funding Team be established as described in report SIC-07-48, dated November 6, 2007, to open up more effective direct communications with upper levels of government with the intent to secure additional funding or upload non-municipal services;
2. That Council appoint two Members of Council to the Team; and
3. That the Team establish a charter setting out its terms of reference, scope of responsibility and reporting structure and report back to Council for its adoption.

3.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Council has expressed a desire to establish a team that will establish and maintain more effective and direct communication with upper levels of government with the intent of receiving additional funding or moving non-municipal services back to the more appropriate level of government. That direction was forward to the Strategic Initiatives Committee, who subsequently requested a staff report.

4.0 INPUT FROM OTHER SOURCES

4.1 Input from Others

- The City Manager and Commissioners have reviewed this report and support the recommendations.

4.2 Input from the Auditor General

- The Auditor General has reviewed this report and supports the recommendations.

5.0 ANALYSIS

5.1 Direction

- Council received report CM-07-59, Strategic Financial Plan Process 2008 – 2011 Update, and discussed means of achieving fiscal sustainability in the face of mounting financial pressures and the desire to provide services to the citizens of Oshawa.
- Council directed “that a Strategic Team made up of Council and staff members be formed, and solely dedicated to achieving more effective direct communications, and funding from upper levels of government in order to assist tax payers specifically in the City of Oshawa in reducing their tax burden, as well as fund future projects and programming.”
- This motion was referred to SIC which referred this item to staff for a report.

5.2 Existing Communication Channels

- Municipalities benefit from the efforts of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Municipal Finance Officers Association (MFOA), and the Association of Municipal Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO) who advocate on behalf of the municipal sector on a variety of issues and needs.
- The City also has direct access to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) as evidenced through a number of past Council resolutions.

5.3 Recent Responses to Municipal Needs

- In recent years there has been some reversal of the downloading placed on municipalities by both the Federal and Provincial government through the following actions:
 - The Ontario Community Reinvestment Fund (CRF) funding has been sustained at \$401,000 for more than five years
 - The Federal government provided full rebate to municipalities for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) several years ago
 - Gas tax funding for both roads and transit
- However, the Province has been announcing new programs and policies which have had or will have a negative financial impact on municipalities including:
 - Additional supplementary Ontario Municipal Employee Retirement System benefits for specified municipal employees, e.g., fire fighters;
 - Introduction of Presumptive Legislation to award WSIB benefits to injured workers on a retroactive basis;
 - New statutory holiday on the third Monday of February; and
 - Other legislation such as the Dog Owners Liability Act.
- The Province has taken the accolades for these programs/initiatives but has not provided additional funding to municipalities to enable them to respond.

5.4 Recent Successes in Obtaining Funding

- Annual CRF funding of \$401,000 continues to flow to the City, although 2007 may be the last year.
- COMRIF funding was provided to the City as a result of its application for Intake 1, however, funding requests by the City for Intake 2 and 3 were not successful.
- City staff continues to search for funding opportunities through individual grants and programs, and have had some success through these efforts.

5.5 Successes of Other Municipalities

- From time to time significant financial grants are awarded to municipalities across Ontario. Unfortunately, there has been no formal process/application for these as they have been awarded arbitrarily. Those awards may have been the result of lobbying and a direct communication channel that is now being considered by Council.

5.6 Proposed Team, Structure and Charter

- Council desires a team that will advocate on behalf of the City (and other municipalities) to ensure the message of the City's needs are (regularly) communicated and that funding requests to meet specific needs from upper government levels are articulated and acted upon.
- Such a team should have a charter that sets out its terms of reference, scope of responsibility and reporting structure.
- It is proposed that this team be called the Strategic Connections and Funding Team and be comprised of two Councillors and a staff representative from each of the City's four departments. Such a team should establish a charter and meet on a regular basis to articulate the needs of the City including issues such as being unfairly charged with funding non-municipal programs; develop and recommend mechanisms that could be established to either fund those gaps or transfer service delivery; and identify other opportunities that may arise that would benefit the City.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- There are no immediate financial implications as a result of the recommendations of this report.

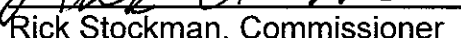
7.0 RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

- This report meets the objective of a caring and responsible community by ensuring affordability and accountability.

Original Signed By

Chris Brown, Director
Finance Services

Original Signed By


Rick Stockman, Commissioner
Corporate Services Department

RS:CB